

CONGRESSMAN GEORGE RADANOVICH

REPRESENTING CALIFORNIA'S 19TH DISTRICT

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Securing the Agricultural Workforce

Congressman Radanovich is a primary co-sponsor of the Agricultural Jobs, Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act of 2003 (AgJOBS), H.R. 3142, which was introduced on Sept. 23 to provide for a more stable, secure, safe and legal American agriculture work force and food supply.

This newly revised, historically bipartisan, farmworker reform legislation builds upon years of discussion and ideas from among Members in both houses of Congress, growers, farmworker advocates, Latinos and others.

Several times in recent months, we have all read about the senseless and inhumane deaths of farmworkers being smuggled illegally into the United States. Those who survive to work in the fields are among the most vulnerable persons in this country, unable to assert the most basic legal rights and protections. The nature of the work force and labor market, combined with current laws that require prospective employers to accept legal-looking documentation, has created a "catch-22" in which American agriculture has become overwhelmingly dependent on a work force not legally authorized to be here.

As enforcement of our immigration and employment documentation laws have been stepped up – sporadically and haphazardly – workers are rarely deported but the workplace is frequently and widely disrupted. A growing number of farms are unable to harvest their crops as growers cannot secure a legal work force and/or see recently-hired workers scattered unpredictably. All Americans face the danger of losing more and more of our safe, domestic food supply to imports.

The AgJOBS bill presents a two-step solution to this problem. For the short term, on a one-time basis, experienced, trusted workers with a significant work history in American agriculture would be allowed to stay here legally and could later earn adjustment to legal status after meeting certain

requirements. For the long term, the currently broken and cumbersome H-2A legal guest worker program would be overhauled and made more streamlined, practical and secure.

The system proposed in AgJOBS may not create a “perfect” labor and immigration system in an ideal world. However, for the world we live in, it is a balanced, practical, and achievable approach to resolving current problems and preventing a growing crisis in American agriculture.

More Time to Stop Yet Another Endangered Species Designation

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service granted San Joaquin Valley residents more time to submit their comments to stop the agency from issuing an endangered species designation on the California Tiger Salamander. Congressman Radanovich requested the comment period extension in a Sept. 19 letter to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish, Wildlife and Parks Craig Manson.

The new deadline for comments is Oct. 31.

“Now that we have been given more time, the people of the San Joaquin Valley must voice their concerns and stop this bureaucratic ploy,” Radanovich said. “This action is not supported by scientific evidence and must be stopped. Another endangered species designation will further threaten jobs and economic prosperity in the San Joaquin Valley.”

The California Tiger Salamander is a reptilian creature found on millions of acres of land in the San Joaquin Valley. The Fish and Wildlife Service is proposing to list the creature as a “threatened” species under the provisions of the Endangered Species Act. If the agency does so, millions of acres of land in the San Joaquin Valley will be subject to onerous regulations that severely affect agriculture and local control over land use.

The designations will result in restrictions on property use, including the conversion of grazing land to more intensive agricultural uses. Property owners will be subject to fines or jail time for failing to comply with the provisions of the Endangered Species Act.

Mail, Fax or Email Your Comments to the Fish and Wildlife Service by October 31

Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Service Office
2800 Cottage Way
Suite W-2605
Sacramento CA 95825

Fax: (916) 414-6713
Email: catiger@r1.fws.gov

Attend the Public Information Session

Friday, October 24
1:00 PM

Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors Chambers
1010 Tenth Street, Suite 6500
Modesto

More Funding For Riverbank Plant

The House passed the conference report for H.R. 2658, the Fiscal Year 2004 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill, which contains \$3 million for the Riverbank Army Ammunition Plant in Riverbank to establish a medium caliber projectile manufacturing facility. The measure passed the House on a bipartisan vote of 407 to 15.

“The Riverbank facility provides jobs that are needed to keep our economy growing,” Congressman Radanovich said. “It is critical to expand the capabilities of the Riverbank plant to keep it competitive with other facilities.”

The Riverbank plant will use the funds to develop facilities to manufacture projectiles and parts for the new 105-millimeter family of munitions and munitions for future combat systems developed under the U.S. Army’s “Army Transformation” standards. The Riverbank plant currently produces 60 and 81-millimeter mortar shells.

The conference report is the final version of a bill as agreed to by conferees from the House and the Senate. The Senate must next approve the conference report and then the President must sign the bill.

Progress on Courthouse for Fresno

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings and Emergency Management passed by a voice vote H.R. 1274, a bill to transfer the B.F. Sisk Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse to Fresno County.

“This is a big first step to getting a new building for the Fresno County courts,” Congressman Radanovich said. “Their current facilities are not adequate and they need room to expand.”

The bill will go to the full Transportation and Infrastructure Committee next, then, if approved, to the House floor for full consideration. The Senate must approve a similar measure. After a conference agreement between the House and the Senate and approval by each body, the President must sign the bill.

Once the bill is signed, and the federal court occupies the new federal courthouse currently under construction, the federal government will transfer the Sisk courthouse to Fresno County for use as a county courthouse.

CALFED Legislation Moves Along

The House Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power passed H.R. 2828, the Water Supply, Reliability and Environmental Improvement Act, which reauthorizes CALFED, a federal-state partnership to restore the Bay Delta, improve water quality and increase water storage. The House Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power passed the bill today.

“Water is crucial for our way of life in the San Joaquin Valley,” Radanovich said. “This new comprehensive bill gives us a more safe, reliable and efficient water supply by streamlining the construction of new water storage facilities.”

All water users, agricultural, environmental and urban, win with this legislation. The legislation improves the reliability of the water supply several ways. It simplifies the federal role in CALFED projects by establishing the Interior Department as the lead federal agency to coordinate activities of federal agencies participating in CALFED.

The CALFED bill also emphasizes the need for new and expanded surface and groundwater storage that maximizes water yield, and streamlines construction of storage projects by allowing projects to go forward unless Congress rejects a specific project feasibility study.

The CALFED bill allows for smoother permitting process for water projects by establishing a centralized office in reclamation states to coordinate federal permits and environmental reviews

The bill will go to the full Resources Committee next, then, if approved, to the House floor for full consideration. The Senate must approve a similar measure. After a conference agreement between the House and the Senate and approval by each body, the President must sign the bill.

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